

**BEFORE THE
FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION**

Matthew Teter
Executive Director
Missouri Democratic State Committee
208 Madison Street
Jefferson City, MO 65101,

Complainant,

v.

John Brunner

St. Louis, MO 63114,

Respondent.

RECEIVED
FEDERAL ELECTION
COMMISSION
2011 OCT -5 PM 3:32
OFFICE OF GENERAL
COUNSEL

MUR # 6501

COMPLAINT

Complainant files this complaint against John Brunner for violating the reporting requirements of the Federal Election Campaign Act and Federal Election Commission regulations, as described below.

I. FACTS

News accounts report that Brunner is poised – finally – to announce his candidacy for United States Senator from Missouri on Monday, October 3, 2011. Yet the public record shows that, for more than five months, he has conducted an active campaign while making none of his required filings with the Federal Election Commission. He has failed to file, even while being introduced as a candidate at public events, describing himself as ready to “jump right in” to the race, saying repeatedly and without qualification that he would self-finance his campaign with large personal donations, and having his representatives acknowledge his candidacy and attack his Republican primary opponents.

Brunner's non-filing had nothing to do with any doubt about his intentions. It had everything to do with evading and postponing his required disclosures – reports with the

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Commission due on July 15 and October 15 which would fully disclose his fundraising and spending; and a personal financial disclosure report under the Ethics in Government Act, which would expose his wealth and business dealings to public scrutiny. The Commission should find reason to believe and probable cause that he has violated the law, and seek the maximum allowable penalties.

II. LEGAL ARGUMENT

A. Legal Background

Under the Federal Election Campaign Act, an individual becomes a candidate for federal office, and triggers the Act's registration and reporting requirements, when his or her campaign exceeds \$5,000 in contributions or expenditures. See 2 U.S.C. § 431(2). Among other requirements, he must file a statement of candidacy within 15 days of becoming a candidate. *Id.* § 432(e)(1). The rules allow an individual who genuinely has not decided to run for office to "test the waters," and to defer filing until a decision is made. See 11 C.F.R. §§ 100.72, 100.131. But he becomes a candidate if he or she takes actions that reflect actual candidacy -- for example, by making or authorizing "written or oral statements that refer to him or her as a candidate for a particular office." *Id.* §§ 100.72(b)(3), 100.131(b)(3) (emphasis added).

B. Application to Facts

There is no doubt that Brunner has already raised and spent more than \$5,000. Media accounts show that he has traveled for more than five months promoting his nascent candidacy. He hired a prominent Missouri political consultant, John Hancock, to advise and advocate for him. He traveled to Washington to confer with national Republicans about his candidacy. And he repeatedly declared his intent to use his large personal fortune to fund his campaign.

Nor can there be any doubt that his claim to exploratory status was a mere charade. Far from testing the waters, he has snafed the rules, authorizing his consultants to tout his candidacy and attack his Republican opponents. For example,

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on September 2, 2011, the *Kansas City Star* asked John Hancock whether Brunner was definitely running, to which he replied: "I wouldn't be talking to you if he wasn't."¹

Similarly, according to *Politico*, when Brunner's friend and Republican Todd Akin announced his candidacy, Hancock "sliced" Akin over his long tenure in Washington.²

For five months, Brunner has performed a "dance of the seven veils" in which he acted like a candidate, and yet failed to disclose:

- In April, he said he was "very serious" about running for Senate and would use his large personal fortune to fund the campaign: "If I believe in myself, I'd make a contribution and hope that others feel the same way."³
- In May, his consultant, Hancock, unleashed the aforementioned attack on Representative Akin: "Todd Akin is a politician, been in elected office for 23 years. I would say that if they want an experienced politician to be a U.S. Senator, they've got plenty of choices."⁴
- In July, without recorded dissent, he was introduced as a candidate for U.S. Senate at the Target BBQ in Springfield. He said he was ready to "jump right in" to the race.⁵
- In August, an anonymous "source close to Brunner" was quoted as saying that his formal announcement was "imminent."⁶

¹ Steve Kraske, *The name that scares Missouri Democrats is Brunner ... John Brunner*, *Kansas City Star* (Sep. 2, 2011) (Exhibit A).

² *Akin's in, but MOGOP still without a frontrunner*, *Politico* (May 17, 2011) (Exhibit B).

³ David A. Lieb, *St. Louis businessman might challenge McCaskill in Senate race*, *Assoc. Press* (Apr. 19, 2011) (Exhibit C).

⁴ *Akin's in, but MOGOP still without a frontrunner*, *supra* note 3.

⁵ Transcript, *John Brunner on Missouri U.S. Senate Race*, *Politico* (July 23, 2011) (Exhibit D).

⁶ Cameron Joseph, *Another Republican preparing to challenge Sen. McCaskill*, *The Hill* (Aug. 10, 2011) (Exhibit E).

- In August, Brunner again was quoted as saying that he would make a "sizeable" donation from his large personal fortune to his campaign.⁷ He added: "We're not going to run out of gas on this campaign."⁸

All of this had the desired effect. As the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported in August: "Although Brunner has not formally declared himself as a candidate, he is acting the part."⁹

Brunner had every reason to delay the formal commencement of his candidacy. While he boasts of his vast personal fortune, and his intent to self-finance his campaign, the Ethics in Government Act requires him to disclose the details of that same personal fortune, which might hurt him in the race. By purporting to evade candidacy, Brunner forestalled the required disclosure of information that could be damaging to his electoral prospects. He has also evaded required disclosures to the FEC which would show his sources of financial support, the extent of his self-financing to date, and how precisely he has spent his funds to promote his candidacy.

Under the law, however, these evasions are to no avail. The facts clearly show that Brunner has authorized statements referring to him as a candidate, and hence long ago triggered actual candidacy under FEC rules.

⁷ Jake Wagman, *Germ-X chairman may get into U.S. Senate race*, St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Aug. 15, 2011) (Exhibit F).

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

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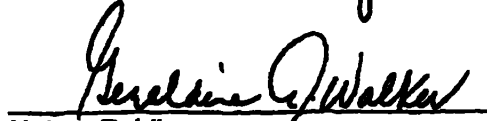
III. REQUESTED ACTION

Because Brunner has violated the Federal Election Campaign Act, we accordingly request that he be enjoined from further violations, compelled to make the required disclosures, and be fined the maximum amount permitted by law.



Matthew Teter

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN to before me this 29th day of September, 2011.


Notary Public

My Commission Expires:



GERALDINE A. WALKER
My Commission Expires
February 19, 2013
St. Louis County
Commission #08651862

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Exhibit A

Kansas City Star: The name that scares Missouri Democrats is Brunner....John Brunner
Steve Kraske, September 2, 2011.

If there's a name that scares Missouri Democrats these days, it's this one: John Brunner. You've probably never heard of him. But you might very soon.

Brunner, 59, appears on the brink of announcing he's in the race for U.S. Senate in Missouri as a Republican. His goal: knocking off Democrat Claire McCaskill next year.

Democrats are fretting about Brunner's profile — and for good reason. He's an outsider at a time when outsiders are attractive. He's a successful businessman who has created jobs at a time when job creation is touch-the-sun hot.

And he's rich — so rich, in fact, that political insiders think he could self-fund a Senate campaign to the tune of millions of dollars.

So in a GOP primary race that already has a congressman from the St. Louis area (Todd Alken), and a former state treasurer (Sarah Steelman), it's Brunner who's giving Democrats fits these days.

And he's not even announced that he's running.

As with any man of mystery, there are lots of questions surrounding Brunner, whose St. Louis-based company, Vi-Ju, made millions of dollars off the Germ-X brand of hand sanitizer.

Here's just one: What's taking him so long to enter the race?

Supporters were hinting months ago that Brunner was on the brink of jumping in and that he was about to make his initial forays into Kansas City. But days turned into weeks, which turned into months...and still no Brunner.

"Very soon," Brunner told the *Politics* blog in July.

"Soon," Brunner spokesman John Hancock told me Friday.

Is he definitely running?

"I wouldn't be talking to you if he wasn't," Hancock said.

Here's another question: Who is he?

Not a lot is known, yet. What we do know is he's a former Marine. He's the third-

generation of Brunners to run Vi-Jon, which manufactures 7,000 private label and branded products. He was arrested in 2004 for drunken driving, but the case was wiped from his record two years later. [~~UP~~His spokesman confirmed this, and the Post-Dispatch has printed the same thing with Brunner acknowledging it happened.]

Then there's this question: What kind of Republican is he?

There aren't too many clues, other than he appears to be deeply conservative. He donated to Pat Buchanan's presidential campaign. In 1964, he was a precinct worker for Barry Goldwater. He and his family helped establish the Missouri Republican Assembly, which works to elect conservatives.

In his few public comments, he's offered no specifics about which direction he wants to see the country going. But he told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch that "the American Dream is shrinking...How can you sit back and relax when you see that you could be of help?"

The leap from the corporate boardroom to the Senate is a long one. Few have made it.

But politics is all about timing.

Is it Brunner time?

<http://midwestdemocracyproject.org/blogs/entries/kraske-name-scares-missouri-democrats-brunnerjohn-brunner/> - ixzz1Z7bmh1Qw

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Exhibit B

AP: St. Louis businessman might challenge McCaskill in Senate race Tuesday, April 19, 2011 | 3:53 p.m. CDT
BY DAVID A. LIEB/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JEFFERSON CITY — The field of Republicans challenging Democratic U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill would get a surprise addition from a St. Louis businessman who has the ability to pour some of his own cash into a campaign.

John Brunner, the chairman of health care products company Vi-Jon Inc., confirmed to The Associated Press on Tuesday that he is considering entering Missouri's 2012 Senate race.

"I'm very serious," Brunner said. "We've got a fire raging here in our country and our economy. It's going to take an additional level of character and competence to deal with the crisis."

McCaskill, a freshman senator closely aligned with President Barack Obama, is among the Republicans' top targets as they seek to regain a majority in the Senate in next year's election.

Already vulnerable because of Missouri's swing-state status, McCaskill recently took a sharp political hit for her taxpayer-funded travel on an airplane in which she and her husband have an ownership stake. She reimbursed the federal government \$88,000 and later paid St. Louis County about \$320,000 in back property taxes, interest and penalties related to the plane.

Yet Republicans have struggled to coalesce around a challenger. The only two declared candidates so far are former state Treasurer Sarah Steelman of Rolla and St. Louis attorney Ed Martin, a former gubernatorial chief of staff who lost a bid for Congress last year. Both Steelman and Martin reported fairly lackluster fundraising in the first quarter of 2011 compared to McCaskill's \$1 million in receipts.

Brunner told the AP that he would be willing to put some of his own financial fortune into a Senate bid, although he declined to say how much.

"If I believe in myself, I'd make a contribution and hope that others feel the same way," Brunner said.

Also considering the Senate race is Republican U.S. Rep. Todd Akin, in whose suburban St. Louis district Brunner lives. Neither Akin nor Brunner gave a timeline for when they would announce a decision on entering the Senate race.

<http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2011/apr/20/st-louis-businessman-considers-senate-run/>

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Exhibit C

Politico: Akin's in, but MOGOP still without a frontrunner

Politico, May 17th 2011

Six-term Rep. Todd Akin's leap into the Senate race Tuesday gives Missouri Republicans a sitting congressman from the most populous area of the state with a respectable fundraising base.

But it still doesn't necessarily hand the party a clear front runner in its quest to dislodge first-term Democrat Claire McCaskill.

Not only will Akin have to face former State Treasurer Sarah Steelman -- who while flubbed an early fundraising opportunity has also shown a penchant to throw a primary punch -- it looks increasingly likely he could face a self-funder from his own backyard who lacks the baggage of a voting record.

An Akin Senate bid would have been scoffed at in many Republican circles just six months ago. But former Sen. Jim Talent's decision against a race coupled with Steelman's lackluster start and former congressional candidate Ed Martin's exit, left regular donors and members of the business community without an option.

Akin's challenge is two-fold: To expand beyond his suburban St. Louis base and into the Republican-rich territory of southwest Missouri, where Steelman is strong and to stave off momentum by wealthy businessman Jon Brunner, who is impressing party regulars as he makes his rounds around the state.

In his announcement speech, Akin cited "the debt and excessive federal spending" as reasons he decided to vault into the race and it's true that Akin boasts one of the most staunchly conservative voting records in the House.

But look for Steelman and potentially Brunner to eventually target Akin for his support of earmarks, which have become an anathema to the base. Though she ultimately lost the primary, Steelman gained ground on former Rep. Kenny Hulshof in the 2008 gubernatorial race by roasting him repeatedly for his sponsorship of earmarks.

In addition, with McCaskill already positioned as a leading anti-earmark voice, Steelman and Brunner could argue that Akin is unable to neutralize that key fiscal issue.

Both Steelman and Brunner hinted they would set up a contrast with Akin by pointing out his 12 years in Washington.

"The Washington establishment has been looking for a candidate that will protect their interests instead of those of the people. I've repeatedly said that this election will be a choice between a continuation of the same policies of the last twelve years or someone who is willing to fight to restore fiscal discipline to our government," Steelman said.

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Brunner adviser John Hancock also sliced Akin for the years he's racked up in elected office.

"Todd Akin is a politician, been in elected office for 23 years. I would say that if they want an experienced politician to be a U.S. Senator, they've got plenty of choices," he said in an interview.

How Akin handles those critiques in the coming weeks and months will determine whether he can achieve frontrunner status and unite the party early enough to give it a robust shot at knocking off McCaskill.

Posted By David Catanese 01:20 PM

http://www.politico.com/blogs/davidcatanese/0511/Akins_in_but_MOGOP_still_without_a_frontrunner.html

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Exhibit D

PoliticMo: Brunner 'ready' to jump in Senate race

BY ELI YOKLEY - JULY 24, 2011

POSTED IN: US SENATE RACE

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. — With the deal almost sealed for a political announcement, St. Louis businessman John Brunner made his way to Springfield Saturday night to the Greene County GOP's annual barbecue.

Likely to announce in the coming weeks his intention to seek the Republican nomination to challenge Democratic Senator Claire McCaskill, Brunner arrived as the room was standing to sing the National Anthem, and, mirroring his earlier years as a Marine, stood at stiff attention, with his arm straight down and hand on heart.

"Here's the real key — this is going to be one of the biggest, toughest campaigns in Missouri history. Claire is a brilliant politician, she has great staff and resources," Brunner told PoliticMo in one of his first public interviews. "This is something that is going to require great organization, a great team, a lot of dedicated people, and that's what we've been doing here for the last 90 days is putting together the very best team, the best resources, best organization we can find."

Brunner said the organizational part is almost finished, and a launch plan is being developed for an announcement "soon."

"People have said, 'you can't change the U.S. Senate.' You can't. But you can change the Senators," Brunner said. "That's my plan: if we're going to get the job done, we change the Senators to get people in there that can get the job done."

Brunner expressed frustration with "establishment" politicians in Washington, blaming them for not addressing some of the nation's big problems years ago. Speaking of the current debt ceiling showdown, Brunner said, "We wouldn't have gotten to this crisis if we had the right kind of people in Washington doing the job."

Brunner, flanked by consultant John Hanratty, made his way through the crowd of a couple hundred to shake hands and meet with voters, crossing the paths of both of his Republican opponents Todd Akin and Sarah Steelman.

Though Brunner has not served in Washington, he has been a political player. In the past, he has contributed thousands to political candidates, including some \$30,000 to Akin.

"Congressman Akin has been a good Congressman and I think he's done a good job in that second district," Brunner said. "In times like this, in a crisis, the type of experience and skill sets that you need in D.C., in the Senate, is going to take a whole different skill set than someone who's been in politics for 25 years."

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Instead, Brunner said Washington needs people with business experience.
"From 30 years of creating jobs here in Missouri, from a hundred year old family business, I've been on the ups and downs," Brunner said. "I think most of the people in D.C. are somewhat clueless about what it takes to create jobs."

<http://politicmo.com/2011/07/24/brunner-ready-to-jump-in-senate-race/>

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POLITICMO TRANSCRIPT

July 23, 2011

JOHN BRUNNER on MISSOURI U.S. SENATE RACE
Doling Park
SPRINGFIELD, Mo.

Q. You're A long way from St. Louis --

A. Yeah, it's great to be here. Great people.

Q. So, where are you in this decision process as far as running for U.S. Senate -- announcement soon?

A. [Demonstrating with his body, he moves away] I was here, [Moves much closer] Now I'm here. I'm ready to jump right in.

Q. What's going to seal the deal?

A. ...Here's the real key -- this is going to be one of the biggest, toughest campaigns in Missouri history. Claire is a brilliant politician, she has great staff and resources, she's getting money in from Spielberg, Kevin Klein, you've got to look at that and say, this is something that is going to require great organization, a great team, a lot of dedicated people, and that's what we've been doing here for the last 90 days is putting together the very best team, the best resources, best organization we can find. We've just about got it together here. Now we're looking at the launch plan, and that's where we are right now.

Q. Is that going to be in the next month, next couple months, any idea?

A. (John Hancock) Soon.

A. (Brunner) Very soon. You're talking some numbers that are right there.

Q. So, what sets you apart from [your opponents] Sarah Steelman and Todd Akin?

A. I guess you've got to look at the crisis that's going on. And the thing, a lot of people like myself, who have not been in politics are really sick and tired of whats going on in Washington, D.C. Look at -- here we are on a Saturday, meeting two hours in the White House, nobody seems to get their act together. Where were they last year, five years ago, ten years ago? We wouldn't have gotten to this crisis if we had the right kind of

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people in Washington doing the job. I'm just volunteering, like a lot of other people who are being engaged for the first time, getting involved, to get in there and figure that out.

People have said, 'you can't change the U.S. Senate.' You can't. But you can change the senators. And that's my plan: If we're going to get the job done, we change the senators to get people in there that can get the job done. ...From 30 years of creating jobs here in Missouri, from a hundred year old family business, I've been on the ups and downs. This business has gone through since 1908 – World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, all the ups and downs in the economy, and we keep plugging away. We understand, as somebody in manufacturing, on production lines, driving forklifts, loading trucks, everything it takes to create jobs.

I think most of the people in D.C. are somewhat clueless about what it takes to create jobs. They're like deer in the headlights. So, right now, everyone talks about shared sacrifices, like, how many people can we cram on the life boat. Why are we talking about shared sacrifice – why don't we talk about expanding the American dream, about getting the business going. Businesses are standing on the sidelines wanting to get back engaged. They're passionate. They want to rebuild the American dream. But the instability and lack of confidence in Washington is causing people to say the risks are too great compared to the reward. Let's change the risk, reward ratio with good people.

I had a great meeting here, sometime back with Ron Johnson, He was just elected in Wisconsin. 31 years in the family manufacturing business – I'm in the manufacturing business. We sat down and talked. I said, 'Senator Johnson.' He said, 'Ron.' I said, 'What'd you find out?' He said, 'The senate is broken, and the country's broke.' I said, 'what's it take?' He said, 'They don't understand strategy, they don't understand business plans, they just don't understand organization.' He said, 'If you can come up here and help me, we get other people coming from industry, from business, their professions, get rid of the politicians, and let's go in here with real people from real jobs to solve real problems.' And I said, 'you've got a compelling case.' He said, 'Get up here John, I need your help.'

Q: You've supported Todd Akin in the past – he's running for the same seat – Why don't you support him this time?

A: Congressman Akin has been a good Congressman, and I think he's done a good job in that second district. As a second district Congressman, he's gained seniority, and has done a good job as a congressman. In times like this, in a crisis, the type of experience and skill sets that you need in D.C., in the Senate, is going to take a whole different skill set than someone who's been in politics for 25 years. I think that's what you're seeing all across America.

<http://politiemo.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/POLITICMO-INTERVIEW-JOHN-BRUNNER-on-MISSOURI-U.S.-SENATE-RACE-7-28-2011.html>

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Exhibit E

The Hill: Another Republican preparing to challenge Sen. McCaskill

By Cameron Joseph - 08/10/11 12:39 PM ET

Republican businessman John Brunner's announcement that he will run for the Senate in Missouri is "imminent," according to sources close to him.

Brunner's campaign will immediately shake up what had been a head-to-head campaign between Rep. Todd Akin (R-Mo.) and former Missouri Treasurer Sarah Steelman in their quest for Sen. Claire McCaskill's (D-Mo.) seat, a top Republican target this year.

Brunner's announcement is likely to come sometime after this week.

The wealthy owner of Vi-Jon Laboratories, best known for producing the Germ-X hand sanitizer, Brunner will be able to help fund his campaign.

While he has not previously run for elected office, Brunner has long been involved with Missouri Republican politics. He worked for Pat Buchanan's presidential campaign in 1996 and has donated to many GOP causes over the years.

He and Akin also have a long-standing relationship. Akin spoke at the funeral of Brunner's father in 2006, and Brunner has donated more than \$30,000 to Akin's campaigns over the years. As recently as this spring, Brunner described Akin as a "fantastic guy."

A source close to the Akin campaign described the two as "close friends for a long time." He said they have not spoken recently, but that Brunner had long been mulling a run.

"A lot of it has to do with Brunner was expressing interest a long time before Todd was in," said the source. "He surrounded himself with a team of people who said 'you've got to do this, you're the guy to do it,' and once they've got their hooks in you they're not going to let go."

The source close to Brunner agreed that the two have a good relationship, and said Brunner wants to run because he believes his business experience is needed in the Senate.

"John's been an Akin supporter for years — Todd's voting record for the most part is something John appreciates," said the source. "The question really is, in a time like this is the public looking for and needing someone with a fresh, different perspective altogether, or is it a time for folks who have a whole lot of political and government experience to step forward?"

Democrats have derided Akin as being too conservative for the state and a poor campaigner, and Steelman has come up short in fundraising so far, with less than

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\$200,000 cash on hand for the race.

While Brunner could fizzle on the stump or struggle with handling the spotlight once the campaign gets going, he could be a tougher candidate than the other two, say some Democrats in the state.

"With Brunner, the fact is that he doesn't have a record, he doesn't have the baggage of taking tough votes," said one senior Missouri Democratic official. "In an economy like this having someone walk out and say 'I've created x number of jobs, Claire McCaskill hasn't created a single one,' that's pretty good with the economy being the way it is."

But Missouri Democratic Party senior spokeswoman Caitlin Legacki predicted that a tough primary would scuff up Brunner's image.

"The Republican primary is going to be a lengthy and bruising endeavor for anyone who decides to run, but especially for a candidate who would bring his own, unique vulnerabilities to what is expected to be a divisive primary," she said. "Before Brunner can be taken seriously as a candidate, Missouri voters look forward to learning his extremist positions on all the tough issues, as well as taking an in-depth look at his professional background and personal beliefs."

McCaskill won by just a two-point margin in 2006, and Missouri, a swing state, has been trending away from the Democrats — It was one of the only swing states President Obama did not win in 2008, and his approval ratings there are worse than in most traditionally purple states.

The primary will not take place until next August.

<http://thehill.com/blogs/ballot-box/senate-races/176301-brunner-senate-campaign-in-missouri-imminent>

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Exhibit F

St. Louis Post-Dispatch: Germ-X chairman may get into U.S. Senate race

Jake Wagman, August 15, 2011

ST. LOUIS • John Brunner may not be a household name, but his company's signature product is on desks across America.

Now, the man behind Germ-X hand sanitizer is poised to shake up the race for U.S. Senate in Missouri, hoping his corporate savvy and personal fortune can help him rise to the top of a Republican field that has no clear front-runner.

Brunner, 59, is chairman of Vi-Jon Inc. in Vinita Park, a company that, with the notable exception of its top-selling hand sanitizer, specializes in providing store brand soaps and lotions for major retailers such as Walmart.

After months of trawling the state and conferring with veteran Republican activists, he is expected, in the next few weeks, to announce his bid to unseat U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill in the November 2012 election.

Before Brunner can even face the incumbent Democrat, however, he would have to win a GOP primary that includes his own congressman, Todd Akin — a longtime family friend — and former state Treasurer Sarah Steelman, who has run in two previous statewide elections.

Some Republicans question whether Brunner — described by those who know him as humble and congenial — can survive the rigors of a high-stakes campaign. A scrape with the law from his past — a drunk driving arrest seven years ago — has already attracted attention from the opposition, though the case has been wiped from his record.

And when it comes to sending candidates to Capitol Hill, Show-Me voters tend to stick with what they know: All of the U.S. senators from Missouri in the last 60 years have had long political résumés, came from political families, or both.

Still, Brunner believes that at a time when the stock market is in a free fall and both parties are getting poor marks for their handling of debt negotiations, voters may embrace a political outsider who has spent more time in the boardroom than in the Beltway.

"The country's in a crisis," Brunner said. "And the American Dream is shrinking. The rungs in the ladder are being knocked out for people. How can you sit back and relax when you see that you could be of help?"

NOT JUST SON OF THE BOSS

The company that would become Vi-Jon has been in St. Louis since 1912, when it was a

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chemical distributor shipping hydrogen peroxide along the old Wabash tracks. The firm takes its name from the first names of Brunner's grandfather John, who founded the company, and Brunner's grandmother, Viola.

Brunner's father took over the company after Brunner's grandfather was killed in a freak accident — he was struck by a baggage wagon at Union Station in 1946.

After several years as an infantry officer in the Marines, John Brunner joined the company at his father's urging in 1978. He did a little bit of everything, Brunner says, fixing equipment and sweeping floors to prove that he wasn't just an "S.O.B. — son of the boss."

Brunner, who lives in Frontenac, became president of the company in 1990 and, two years later, chief executive.

In the mid-1990s, Brunner started working with the company's chemists to produce Germ-X, though it didn't start flying off of the shelves until two years ago, when health officials began encouraging the use of hand sanitizer to prevent the spread of the H1N1 flu virus. At the height of the scare, the company was producing nearly 27,000 gallons of Germ-X a day. In 2009, the company's revenue topped \$600 million.

Mel Turner, a former vice president at Vi-Jon, said that the idea for Germ-X — down to the name itself — was "almost singularly" conceived by Brunner.

Vi-Jon was acquired by a private investment firm from Boston in 2006. Brunner stayed on as chief executive until the end of 2009. He remains head of the company's board. Brunner initially expressed interest in running for Senate in 2010, but the state's Republican establishment worked to clear the field for their candidate of choice, Roy Blunt, who won the November election in a landslide.

The dynamics are shaping up differently for 2012. Many of those Republicans who worked on Blunt's campaign have not picked a favorite to capture the party's Senate nomination. Some appear to be lining up behind Brunner.

Andy Blunt, who ran his father's Senate campaign, has had discussions with Brunner about a potential campaign. Brunner has also enlisted the help of John Hancock, former executive director of the Missouri GOP.

Although Brunner has not formally declared himself a candidate, he is acting the part. He's attempted to make inroads with GOP officials — hosting a mixer for Republican state representatives, sponsoring a fundraiser for Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder — and worked the crowds at events such as the "Sucker Day" celebration in Nixa, Mo.

"There is a real thirst for another candidate to get in and to show some leadership," said

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Miles Ross, a former Roy Blunt campaign aide who escorted Brunner around southwest Missouri. "The public out there — the grass roots, the donor base — they are looking for someone strong enough to beat Claiborne. And they haven't seen that yet."

Some are not yet convinced Brunner is that candidate.

One of the business leaders Ross took Brunner to see is Loren Cook II, vice president of a Springfield company that manufactures ventilation equipment. Cook applauded Brunner's enthusiasm but questioned whether he has the intangibles that make a candidate successful.

"I'm from the Show-Me state — you're going to have to show me more than a 30-minute meeting in April," Cook said. "He has the energy. I don't know if I get a sense of charisma."

Brunner is "the great unknown at this point" said Kurt Witzel, a Republican committeeman from Oakville. When it comes to Akin, Republicans in the St. Louis area at least know where he stands on most key issues. The same cannot be said for Brunner. "I'm not sure what he would bring to the race," Witzel said. "If he does get in, I'm sure he'll let us know."

'ALL ABOUT THE MISSION'

One thing Brunner is poised to bring to the campaign is money — his own. Brunner declined to say how much of his personal wealth he would invest in his campaign but suggested his contribution would be sizable. It would have to be to match Akin, who has about \$1.2 million in the bank, and McCaskill, who is sitting on \$2.8 million.

"We're not going to run out of gas on this campaign," Brunner said.

Running against Akin also presents a personal challenge for Brunner — the two have known each other for years. Akin spoke at Brunner's father's funeral in 2006; Brunner's family has been supporting Akin since he first ran for Congress.

Brunner, his wife, and other family members have donated more than \$60,000 to Akin's campaign since 2000. Brunner himself gave Akin's campaign \$5,000 as recently as March, two months before Akin announced his candidacy for Senate.

Brunner has spoken to Akin about the Senate race, though he declined to provide details of their discussion.

"Everybody has to understand it's all about the mission," Brunner said. "It's not about personalities."

Asked about Brunner's pending entrance into the race, Akin's camp pointed to Brunner's previous campaign contributions.

"He had been supporting the right guy," said Akin spokesman Steve Taylor. A Steinhilber spokesman declined to comment about Brunner's candidacy. The Rolla Republican, though, could benefit from having two St. Louis opponents battling for the same geographic base.

Either way, Akin is taking his former ally's campaign seriously enough that he's begun looking into Brunner's background. Court records show that an Akin campaign aide in June requested a copy of Brunner's old DUI case.

Brunner was arrested in August 2004 after a sheriff's deputy who pulled him over for speeding on Highway 94 detected liquor on his breath. Brunner, driving a new Jaguar, told the officer he had two scotches on the golf course earlier that evening. His blood-alcohol content was later measured at .09, barely over the legal limit.

After spending the night in jail, Brunner's drivers license was suspended for three months. But the case was wiped from his driving record in 2006 after a judge invalidated the breath test. Brunner's lawyer successfully argued that there was not substantial proof that the solution used to perform the calibration check on the breathalyzer was from an approved supplier.

"Obviously, it was a challenging experience, and I'm a better person for it," Brunner said of the arrest.

Though Brunner believes his business acumen will appeal to voters in a time of economic uncertainty, there is little precedent in the state for what he is trying to accomplish. Four of the six statewide elected officials in Missouri came from other public offices.

The two that didn't each have significant experience in government and politics: Auditor Tom Schweich worked at the United Nations for John Danforth and Missouri Secretary of State Robin Carnahan grew up around her father's campaigns.

Nationally, some corporate executives have had success leaving the corner office for the campaign trail.

Pizza entrepreneur Herman Cain has surprised some with the level of momentum he's achieved in Iowa as a presidential aspirant. Last year, Wisconsin Republican U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, the head of a polyester and plastic company with no previous political experience, stunned three-term incumbent Democrat Russ Feingold.

Brunner met with Johnson in Washington earlier this year. Brunner said the two had a

"wonderful" discussion in which Johnson said that things in Washington "were worse than I thought."

Brunner said that Johnson, bemoaning that "half the people up here are lawyers," encouraged him to run.

"I said, 'Man, that's a huge sacrifice,' " Brunner said. "And he says, 'John, at the end of the day, you got to do what you got to do.' "

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